President Finds Self Locked Out

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Associated Press

President Nixon, a surprise visitor to the White House on New Year's Day, is said to have found himself locked out of his own Oval Office Monday morning.

Mr. Nixon, once expected to spend the entire holiday weekend at Camp David, Md., apparently upset security duty rosters—and other things—by returning from his mountaintop lodge Sunday night.

Although there is evidence that a few aides expected the quick return from Camp David, one White House official reported that when Mr. Nixon appeared at his Oval Office at 7:30 a.m. on New Year's Day he discovered, after futile wrestling with the doorknob, that routine security precautions were keeping him out of his own inner sanctum.

By all accounts, it did not take him long to find a White House policeman — a uniformed member of the Executive Protection Service—who came up with a passkey.

The Chief Executive, who seems more apt to alter apparent plans the longer he remains in office — a point noted with some of his predecessors—gave no explanation for his helicopter return to the White House on one of the nation's traditional live-it-up holiday evenings.

True, Mrs. Nixon had left earlier in the day for Southern California to take part in Pasadena's Rose Bowl festivities where her old school, the University of Southern California, defeated Ohio State University's football team.

By all accounts, Mr. Nixon's only activity on New Year's Eve was to place a congratulatory phone call to Coach George Allen of the Washington Redskins, winners of the National Football Conference championship.

Allen, his wife, four children and two in-laws, turned up at the White House at 10 a.m. Monday to enjoy the President's hospitality.

Newsmen and photographers summoned to the White House to record a portion of the meeting between winning coach and winning 1972 presidential candidate noted that almost immediately thereafter, Mr. Nixon had deserted his Oval Office for hideaway quarters in the neighboring Executive Office Building. There, and at Camp David, Mr. Nixon has said, he does his best thinking.